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ABSTRACT

This article sets Youth Training Scheme (YTS) curriculum development work in Great Britain against the background of national policymaking in education and training which has to take account of social, political, and economic imperatives and acceptability. Section 1 deals with how curriculum developers/researchers may have to decide what to research when the program is already moving. Section 2 sets out the curriculum development issues and outcomes of the Core Skills Project and summarizes for other researchers some of the difficulties of curriculum development in YTS. Section 3 comments on the current state of YTS after several years of youth training development work, good practice, and experience. Section 4 comments on the role of the Core Skills Project approaches in supporting YTS and work-based learning generally as seen through the eyes of project workers. Finally, the paper makes a plea for the establishment of a center to assist in formulating a more coherent, planned, proactive approach to vocational education and training research and development work that can provide advice on research priorities to inform policymakers. (KC)

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WORKING PAPER

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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN YTS

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Core Skills Project Director

July 1985

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The Further Education Staff College

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Curriculum Development in YTS

Margaret Levy, Project Director E.S.F. YTS Core Skills Project, Further Education Staff College

SECTION I

Introduction

For those interested in public policy making this article attempts to offer a glimpse into the very wide range and diversity of issues which have to be confronted by MSC policy makers and curriculum developers and the ways in which this affects the processes of curriculum development in YTS. It also reports in more detail on one innovative curriculum development project supported jointly by the European Social Fund and MSC and known as the European Social Fund (ESF) YTS Core Skills Project.

The ESF YTS Core Skills Project attempted to carry out curriculum and training development 'on the hoof'. That is to say it had to work within a live situation with YTS programmes were already in existence with over 300,000 trainees of wide ability range, in a variety of placements with a variety of providers. This is very different from the usual curriculum development scenario which generally has a narrower target group and a more circumscribed set of providers and interested agencies (DES, LEAs, education institutions/teachers etc).

As in many fields of policy making the goal posts continually move, and this was certainly the case with youth training policy development which was taking place against a background of radical change of the education/training system of the country as a whole. Curriculum developers therefore had to judge from MSC and Government reports, supplemented by facts and experience, what aspects of education/training and delivery systems would be considered essential and to have consensus and therefore unlikely to be overthrown with change of Government

policy. Long term curriculum and training development work could then concentrate on providing policy advice and instruments to ensure delivery of these essentials.

Identification of Issues for Curriculum Developers in YTS

In the identification of the design parameters of YTS, particular reports and public statements of intent were of overriding importance. The reports included the May 1981 consultative document on the New Training Initiative and the stated commitment of MSC to a two year youth training programme for 16-18s (as and when Government agreed) within the context of the New Training Initiative. It was evident from this and other documents that YTS was intended to be part of one of the most radical and permanent education/training reforms this country had ever undertaken. (The recent White Paper Command 9482, April 1985, confirms this).

The experience from the UVP (Unified Vocational Preparation) programme, launched in July 1976 as a three year pilot, and later extended to 1981, also provided a major influence on YTS design parameters, UVP was an innovative,employer led scheme for employed young people who received little or no training. It enabled and encouraged the development of curricular approaches by employers, industry and FE which were not constrained by traditional education/training thinking. These laid the foundation and provided experience for much of the good practice in YTS schemes today. The assimilation of UVP models into YTS design parameters was further encouraged by the fact that the senior civil servants running UVP were in January 1982 given a major role in YTS design and delivery for the April 1983 start.

Extraction from experience (YOP, UVP, traditional training and FE including apprenticeships, TOPs etc); from numerous Government and MSC reports and policy statements (especially NTI); and from facts and predictions (about skill shortages, the impact of technological changes on the labour market both national and local, changes in roles of workers, in the industrial base of the country, with white collar workers for the first time ever exceeding blue collar workers by 1985), appeared to establish the following essential design parameters for a prototype YTS:

- *it was to be a work based, employer led training programme*
- *work based learning was to be a prime feature, one reason being that experience showed it to be highly motivating for young people*
- *assessment of achievement was to be performance based, criterion referenced, and concerned with competent performance rather than being based on time serving or largely on tests of knowledge*
- *new kinds of standards would be established which were independent of any particular training programme, and accreditation of these would be accessible to all regardless of age and/or how they had acquired their skills (examples of such performance standards would be the Music Boards Grade Examinations in piano, violin, singing and so on, and the car driving test as it currently stands)*
- *first line supervisors would take on new roles in training young people*
- *processes of education/training would be those that encouraged autonomous, effective learning and would include guidance/reviewing, induction and initial assessment*

- *YTS would cater for all abilities of young people and not discriminate on grounds of sex, ethnic origin, or learning disadvantage*
- *the training programme would equip young people to cope with adult life and occupational mobility*

Finally the YTS prototype design not only had to encompass all the above but also had to fit into the context and intention of NTI as a whole. This was concerned with access to education and training for all post-16, to provide a better equipped, better qualified, better educated and better motivated workforce, the aim being to provide a flexible, adaptable, mobile workforce which would benefit the country, the local community, and employers and young people.

Issues of Context for Curriculum and Training Developers

Any innovation and change agent, whether dealing with curriculum, organisations, technology etc., has to take account not only of the declared policy intentions and the rhetoric associated with them, but also of issues of implementation of any change required, and thus must take account of the opinions of various lobby bodies involved in the process of change. In the case of implementation of NTI and YTS this leads to consideration of questions such as:

- *who pays for the training*

  the Government, the employer, the learner?
- *who decides what the training should include*

  the Government, the employer, the learner?
- *who delivers the training and where*

  we have a public sector system of FHE, industry sector organisations, private sector trainers. (In YTS these agencies are now seen as competing for the training money MSC is making available)
- *what is the role of the community in any NTI provision*

  what can employers, trade unionists, education services, voluntary agencies, ratepayers, young people contribute/control

NTI philosophy and rhetoric proposed 'new' kinds of standards which were to be associated with competent performance rather than time serving, and with qualifications relevant to their employment. Implementation of this aspect of NTI immediately raises issues such as:

- *what is meant by competent performance*

  who would recognise it - the learner, the supervisor, the employer?
- *what are the criteria for competent performance*

  who would set them - the Government, MSC, the employer?
- *who would set and own the standards for competent performance*

  the employer, the ITBs, the FE examining/validating bodies, the community in respect of its local labour market interest?
- *who would validate/certificate the standards and bear the cost*

  MSC, Government, employers, parents, learners? There appears to be an unseemly scramble at the moment among some agencies to stake their claim in respect of CPVE

- *what would the currency and credibility of the 'new' standards be*

  how valid would they be for progression, either vertical or horizontal, or within or between occupations and for entry to FE or HE? How would a 'competence' certificate stand up to the more traditional certificate where theory is often more highly regarded and more heavily weighted than practice?

- *what purposes or functions would be associated with standards*

  quality control of providers/learners; employer selection needs; providing appropriate pre-requisites for securing entry to occupational/professional groupings; for selection for FE courses; for employee job satisfaction etc?

Another major issue to be addressed in implementing the 16-18 element of NTI is who decides the content and outcomes of the training programme? Is it up to the employer alone, since it is his or her workplace and in most cases some finance, which are being used to provide the work based training programme? How much should the content relate to local labour market, the country's and young peoples needs and how do we ensure that it does? What are the training methods to be used for delivering the training programme. Does it matter provided that the programme delivers outcomes to the specifications of MSC and within the context of NTI? Again, in terms of implementation, there are very sensitive areas to be taken account of in providing advice to policy-makers on YTS curriculum and training design.

What is the Future of Design and Content in YTS?

MSC's YTS curriculum and training developers have been working over the last three years, with external 'watchdog' committees, internal policy-making sections, and various lobby bodies in the 14-18 field to reach a workable consensus design prototype for YTS which tries to take account of all the issues raised above. One such design prototype is currently being piloted. Since this was agreed however the Government has made a firm commitment to extend YTS to two years and so the goal posts for designers have moved again and now consensus on a curriculum and training model for a two year scheme must again be negotiated. A number of committees has been set up to assist with this process, and their various remits and composition indicate recognition of some of the major areas which will have to be confronted in the future. Curriculum developers who have been working with MSC over several years will await with interest the results of these new committees deliberations to find out how and whether their work has penetrated the field of youth training in any permanent way.

Section II

The ESF YTS Core Skills Project

The ESF YTS Core Skills Project was set up to address curriculum and training design issues in YTS and to devise policy instruments which would assist MSC in achieving its intentions with regard to youth training policies in the context of NTI (New Training Initiative). These policy instruments had to take account of policy issues; be politically, economically and socially acceptable; be technically feasible; and finally be capable of implementation in respect of a wide ability range of an intended 400,000 young people in a wide range of

occupations in such a way that had credibility with all those involved in YTS delivery whether as providers, users or mainly concerned with matters of public accountability.

In constructing a long term curriculum development research project it was essential not only to identify in what policy areas the major curriculum development support would be needed, but also what kinds of curriculum development model might be appropriate to address policy, technical, and implementation issues concomitantly. For the ESF YTS Core Skills Project four policy areas were identified -

(i) containing the most technically difficult curriculum development problems and also

(ii) containing the greatest challenge to traditional values, attitudes and assumptions within the country's education and training scene (eg status of different kinds of learning - academic/theory versus application/practical; wage levels tied to time serving rather than to competence in doing a job, and so on)

These policy areas were

- new standards which relate to competence and criterion referenced systems of assessment, and in which there is very little experience in the country of successful implementation
- certification - what kinds of new qualification systems would be set up and how would they relate to existing structures and certificates. (The Scottish module development work is of interest in this respect).
- progression - what steps and ladders would be available for those seeking to move through any new system of qualifications which would eventually be established
- skill transfer - for flexibility, adaptability, mobility in the workforce. What does this imply in terms of curriculum/ training content and learning methods?

A new curriculum development model was devised in which to explore the above policy areas. Because of the overriding need for any curriculum or training concepts and instruments to be practical and credible, the model was action based, enabled ideas to be tried out in actual YTS placements with Managing Agents, trainees, supervisors, FE tutors, and ensured that issues of implementation, including new ideas, problems and good practice were fed back to the curriculum and policy developers.

The ESF YTS Core Skills Project began in July 1982 (before the start of YTS in April 1983) with one year of investigative work on the kinds of skills needed in a wide variety of jobs and occupations entered by 16/17 year olds. The curriculum development aspect of the Project began in January 1983 and finishes in December 1985.

The European Social Fund (ESF) strongly supported the YTS Core Skills Project proposal, which they were introduced to in February 1982 because of its holistic (especially in terms of addressing learners' personal development) and innovative approach to a work based learning programme within vocational education and training (VET) for 16-18s. Although a lot is heard about the poverty of this country's education and training system when compared with those of other countries, the ESF representatives who considered the project proposal thought that many of the new approaches to youth training in this country could with advantage be used in European countries youth programmes.

The YTS Core Skills Project is committed to curriculum development issues associated with work based learning. Within the four areas of new standards, certification, progression and skill transfer, more detailed work included:

- *identification of transferable core skills (particularly to provide a language for recognising and accrediting those skills which are common in tasks whatever the occupation, so as to improve mobility of the workforce in local labour markets)*
- *provision of a profile record of achievement*
- *provision of new kinds of national standards to aid progression*
- *enhancing work based learning and the integration of on-job and off-job YTS training elements*
- *training materials development for work based learning*
- *introduction of all young people to new technologies*
- *identification of the training needs of YTS supervisors and tutors*
- *dissemination and field-testing on a wider national basis the development activities from the whole project*

The Project is organised to encourage active participation and testing at local level of practices leading to the development of new policy instruments. This iterative action based research method is intended to ensure that implementation of outcomes from the project is feasible, and that the outcomes are seen by users to have credibility and utility in terms of the training programme for which they are being developed.

The local part of the project comprises four demonstration projects (one each in Scotland and Wales, and two in England) each of which provides a group of 50 young people, generally in consortia of employers, with associated trainers, supervisors, FE, and other agencies. Each demonstration project has a Project Leader and Development Officer, who are funded but not employed by MSC. Together with a small central team, now based with the Further Education Staff College and a formative evaluation team from Surrey University, they form a working group which works within a national development framework on curriculum issues in work based learning.

The ESF YTS Core Skills Project ends in December 1985. The outcomes of the Project work to date relate to work based learning (this includes planned work experience,

on- and off-job education/training) and includes:

- *the formulation of a definition of transferable core skills for work based learning programmes. MSC YTS core skills are defined as those skills which are common to a wide range of tasks and which are essential for competence in those tasks*
- *the identification of a framework or catalogue of 103 core skills*
- *a YTS core skills manual, practitioners guide, and guidance leaflet*
- *case studies on the roles and functions of core skills in work based learning and on its accreditation*
- *100 exemplar work based projects which show how to design work based learning using a project approach which includes using the workplace, to enhance job specific and core skills learning*
- *a manual on designing work based projects*
- *a manual on integration in work based learning*
- *staff development/training materials for use by FE, industry, and others*
- *technical leaflets/booklets/case studies on various issues relating to implementation of work based learning and its accreditation (these include reference to transfer of various kinds, job competence, occupational skills, profile record of achievement and so on)*

It is worth summarising for researchers into curriculum development what issues the model used in the ESF YTS Core Skills Project has had to confront since these are very different from those facing most curriculum developers. They are likely to be very important in further development of work based learning.

a. systems in which the policy goal posts keep moving

b. interaction and development in a system which is already up and running

c. a target group which covers the whole ability range

d. lack of youth training experience in many occupational areas

e. a wide variety of learning environments

f. less ability or need to directly control or structure these learning environments because YTS is about partnership not prescription, and uses a work driven model of learning rather than an education driven model. That is, it is not governed by syllabuses but by processes of learning and training and specified outcomes. The secret garden of the curriculum in this case is perhaps replaced by the 'black box' of the employer's workplace

g. an employer led scheme with considerable responsibility laid on employers to deliver and record outcomes for certification which are couched not in syllabus terms but in more general achievement terms which should relate to competence in the workplace. Description of such competence should be readily understood by all users/providers of VET and should relate to local labour market needs and continuing VET provision

h. 'traditional' expectations and values being applied to new education/training approaches. For example the YTS core skills were expected by many to be in the form of a syllabus, and for many the purpose of YTS was seen as offering a second bite of the secondary school curriculum cherry, rather than being a move toward restructuring the vocational education and training (VET)

of the country for all post-16. It has also been very difficult for those used to time serving to recognise that improving an individual's learning skills may shorten the VET time, or alternatively enable that individual to learn more in the same time.

SECTION III

YTS Described After Two Years of Operation/Development: April 1983-1985

YTS is currently defined as a full-time one year programme of foundation training which is work based, builds upon previous educational experience, and starts a process of vocational education and training (VET) which is intended to benefit young people, employers and the community. It is set within the context of the New Training Initiative whose aims are described above, and which is intended to assist Britain to be more competitive in world markets.

Detailed information on the current position of YTS which has received a good consensus of support is to be found in the Guide to the Revised Scheme Design and Content, currently being piloted in YTS schemes by MSC. To quote from the preface:

> ....The Youth Training Scheme is a vocational preparation scheme for young people of all abilities designed to provide an integrated programme of training, planned work experience and further education. Central to its success is that the scheme should be worked based and focussed on practical competence. It is fundamental that young people are involved fully in all aspects of training by being encouraged to participate and to learn to think for themselves. Within the training year there must be a minimum of 13 weeks' off-the-job learning. Close links should be established between job specific training, broad-based in-company training, planned work experience and the off-the-job element, which should be designed to be firmly related to what the trainees do in their companies.
>
> This mix of job-specific, broader work-based experience and off-the-job learning is aimed at developing young people's abilities by encouraging them to find out what they are capable of, practically and personally, in a real working environment .....'

The Guide then continues by spelling out the four new YTS outcomes,

- *competence in a job and/or a range of occupational skills*
- *competence in a range of transferable core skills*
- *ability to transfer skills and knowledge to new situations*
- *personal effectiveness*

emphasises the importance of certification of those outcomes, and finally discusses in greater detail the inputs specified for YTS. These include planned work experience, on-the-job training, off-the-job training/education, together with the training processes which should be carried out in each of those three learning locations. These are induction, initial assessment, participative learning and guidance/reviewing.

The Revised Guide to YTS Scheme Design and Content thus indicates that much of the development work, good practice and experience from the last ten or so years has achieved consensus support and has now been taken forward in policy terms. It is to be hoped that this will continue into any new two year programme. The role of

curriculum developers will now be to assist in operationalising this broad based approach to youth training.

SECTION IV

Role of Core Skills In Supporting YTS and Work Based Learning in General

Through the development work carried out in the ESF YTS Core Skills Project the YTS core skills with their associated approaches have been shown to be central to the fulfilment of all four YTS outcomes and to the training processes specified as inputs. Readers will remember that core skills are defined as those skills which are common to a wide range of tasks and essential for competence in those tasks. Core skills, are thus work related, and underpin the concept of skill transfer. Trainees who achieve competence in core skills should be able to learn new tasks more quickly and this should contribute to the achievement of competence in a job and to the acquisition of a range of occupational skills. Trainees can be shown how to use core skills so that they have a greater awareness of how tasks are constructed, and also what skills they themselves possess. In this way they develop their own approaches to learning and become more autonomous and effective learners. This is a very important aspect of developing personal effectiveness. Core skills are of major importance in a school to work transition programme since they are concerned with application of skills and knowledge to successful completion of tasks in real situations both in work and in adult life.

The derivation of YTS core skills is quite different from that of other 'cores'. YTS core skills are derived from investigations of the skills needed in a wide variety of jobs and occupations and so relate to what workers are expected to do in real work situations. This is different from educational cores which are usually based on educational experts views on what young people should know or be able to do (and in some cases relate more to what can be easily examined than to the value to the learner in future life).

YTS core skills do not comprise a syllabus or a substitute for a secondary school curriculum. They do provide an approach to helping employers use the workplace and on- and -off-job training/education to maximise the learning which can be achieved. They would also serve a useful function alongside a school curriculum especially in terms of project work, work experience, or practical work. Although one could say of a syllabus that it has been completed, it would be totally inappropriate to make this statement about core skills because they continue to form a basis for learning.

Does this mean that core skills are a set of process skills? If by this is meant skills which enable an individual to tackle a new activity or solve a problem, process skills may be an apt description. However core skills carry a number of characteristics:

- *core skills provide a new framework for analysis of jobs in terms of competence*
- *core skills are fundamental to the concept of transfer of skills and therefore to the development of general skills alongside occupationally specific skill development*

- *core skills represent a view on how to encourage autonomous, independent learning*

- *core skills were designed to support the development and accreditation of work based learning*

Core skills have no upper or lower limit and their level of application has to be inferred from the situation or task in which they are used. It should be noted here that tasks generally involve a number of core skills being used concomitantly. Core skills are equally applicable to adult training, including management development training where the core skills of communication and problem solving and planning are prime. (Core skills would similarly continue to be of value in a two year YTS scheme).

Because of lack of space it is not possible to give detailed information on core skills in this article, but publications are available for interested readers. References are given at the end of the article.

The ESF YTS Core Skills Project team are continuing their core skills development work until the end of December 1985. They believe that core skills provide a key element by which vocational education and training can provide flexibility, adaptability and mobility in the workforce, and that their work shows that core skills can perform a number of functions in work based learning programmes. These are:

- *job analysis to help employers identify more clearly what kinds of competence they want in their workforce*

- *diagnosis of training need by the employer/supervisor, by FE, or by the learner*

- *assisting with design of VET programmes which deliver occupational competence in a way which develops transferable skills*

- *helping to provide a broader base of information for employer selection purposes and a common language for the recognition of competence*

- *developing learner awareness of transferable skills and the ability to use these in tackling new tasks*

- *providing a framework for autonomous, effective learning in the workplace*

- *helping supervisors to supervise better by providing a language in which they can convey their experienced worker skills to a trainee*

- *providing a language of skills which can bridge existing occupational and educational languages and so address transition and access issues, integration issues, and reviewing/guidance processes across a wide range of users of VET programmes.*

- *assisting with accreditation of work based learning, with issues of credit transfer and 'progression', and particularly with formative assessment*

Information about the above will be available from the ESF YTS Core Skills Project Office between now and the end of December 1985.

Conclusion

Curriculum development work in YTS is difficult because of the large and varied cohort of 16-18s, number of agencies involved, their different levels of expertise and understanding, and because the field of work based learning is comparatively unexplored and unknown. It is frustrating when policies change, but exciting in the knowledge that project work is contributing to one of the most radical improvements in the education/training system of the country probably this century and certainly since the 1944 Education Act.

It is the author's view that a centre for the collection, collation, exchange and dissemination of information about curriculum and training research and development is badly needed. Such a centre might offer advice to Government and MSC about research priorities to inform policy making, and could help to develop a coherent, planned, pro-active approach to curriculum and training research and development work to improve VET provision so as to move the country more quickly into the position where it can compete in the world markets.

REFERENCES

1. CORE SKILLS IN YTS - MANUAL PART I

   Price £2.50. Obtainable from the MSC, Sales Manager, Room E809, Moorfoot, Sheffield, S1 4PQ. This is a very well written and comprehensive document for YTS, scheme developers. It deals with:

   why there is a YTS Core,
   where core skills are found in jobs,
   how the Core helps movement within and between occupations,
   what managing agents need to do,
   how the Core affects competence,
   how core skills transfer,
   how the way in which you learn can be as important as what you learn,
   a range of training styles,
   how learning is related to the assessment of performance,
   planning a scheme (1) - identifying the skills in tasks,
   planning a scheme (2) - increasing the range of skills offered,
   the importance of knowing what skills you have,
   the assessment of core skills,
   how off-the-job teaching and training can help to develop core skills

2. PRACTITIONERS' GUIDE NUMBER 1 - CORE SKILLS

   Explains briefly the concepts to trainers and front-line supervisors. Available in packs of five, price £2.50. Room E805, MSC, Moorfoot, Sheffield, S1 4PQ.

3. GUIDANCE LEAFLET FOR SCHEMES - CORE SKILLS IN YTS

   This four page leaflet number YTS L37 is free and provides a brief introduction for Managing Agents, Sponsors and other training providers to the YTS Core Skills and their uses. It is available from Room E805, MSC, Moorfoot, Sheffield, S1 4PQ.

4. AVAILABLE FROM FURTHER EDUCATION STAFF COLLEGE

   A number of technical leaflets, case studies on uses of the core skills, work based projects, short technical booklets is available from FESC. Write for details to Core Skills Project Information, FESC, Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6RG.

The attached article was written by Margaret Levy in a personal capacity.

The article sets YTS curriculum development work against the background of national policy-making in education and training which has to take account of social, political and economic imperatives and acceptability.

Section I: deals with how curriculum developers/researchers may have to decide what to research when the target is moving.

Section II: sets out what curriculum development issues the Core Skills Project decided to confront and how, and what its outcomes are, and summarises for other researchers some of the difficulties of curriculum development in YTS.

Section III: comments on where YTS is currently, after several years of youth training development work, good practice and experience.

Section IV: comments on the role of Core Skills Project approaches in supporting YTS and work based learning generally as seen through the eyes of Project workers, and finally makes a plea for the setting up of a centre to assist in formulating a more coherent, planned, pro-active approach to vocational education and training (VET) research and development work which can advise on research priorities to inform policy-makers.

Margaret Levy was until September 1984, leading on YTS design and content in MSC's Quality Branch. She was originally recruited by MSC in September 1981 to take the lead on Quality in Unified Vocation Preparation. Prior to this she was working on YOP, UVP and FE vocational preparation issues in FEU where she was their first outreach Development Officer. She worked in FE for a number of years teaching A-level Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics, and one of her major interests and achievements was the setting up of 'access to science' courses for adults.

Margaret Levy set up and directed the European Social Fund (ESF) YTS Core Skills Project while in MSC. She continues to act as Project Director for MSC under the aegis of the Further Education Staff College for whom she now works.

Local Government Policy Making

Volume 12 Number 1 July 1985

The Quiet Revolution in Education and Training
Editors: Stewart Ranson, Barry Taylor, David Falcon

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